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3 Experts Back Treaty as a First Step

By CHARLES MOHR

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 18 — Three former American arms control negotiators said today that the only realistic hope of persuading the Soviet Union to agree to deeper arms reduction was to ratify the strategic treaty pending before the Senate and proceed to negotiations on a subsequent treaty.

However, Senator George McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, threatened to vote against approving the treaty unless the Senate adopted a resolution freezing the development of new weapons for one year and "mandating" a 30 percent reduction in the strategic arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union over a three-year period.

Partly because of the way he phrased his warning, there seemed an increasing possibility that President Carter would be unable to count on Mr. McGovern's vote.

C.I.A. Chief Said to Resist

It was learned today that the Director of Central Intelligence, Stansfield Turner, was resisting a request to testify in open session this week before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as to whether the treaty is adequately verifiable.

Admiral Turner, along with other witnesses, is scheduled to testify tomorrow afternoon, at a closed meeting of the committee, on the capability of United States intelligence-gathering systems to monitor and collect data about Soviet strategic weapons development.

Senator Frank Church of Idaho, the Democratic chairman of the committee, said this afternoon that Admiral Turner wanted to explain at a closed hearing tomorrow his reasons for not wishing to testify in public on verification.

Some members of the 15-member committee are expected to insist strongly that the C.I.A. chief appear at the public session Wednesday morning, along with Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and Lieut. Gen. Eugene F. Tamm, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and others.

A Concern Over Secrets

A Senate source said that Mr. Turner had argued, over a period of days, against testifying in public for fear of inadvertently disclosing something about the strength, or weaknesses, of United States intelligence-gathering capability if pressed during questioning by Senators.

As it began its second week of hearings on the strategic arms limitation treaty, the Foreign Relations Committee heard

five witnesses who favored ratification of the accord. But the Senators spent more time talking about the agreement's shortcomings and imperfections than about its merits.

So gloomy had assessments about the value of the treaty become that late in the afternoon Senator Church felt compelled to call upon his colleagues to remember that "SALT II is the only game in town" and that while "each Senator in his own mind can conjure up a better treaty, the Senate had to decide whether to approve this one."

2 Former Arms Aides Testify

Three men who helped direct arms-control policy and negotiations from 1969 to 1978 strongly urged the Senate to approve the treaty. They were Gerard C. Smith, U. Alexis Johnson and Paul C. Warnke.

Two other witnesses said the treaty fell far short of being a truly effective instrument to curb the arms race but urged that the Senate ratify it and append a resolution "instructing" United States negotiators to seek a much stronger agreement for the future that would call for annual reductions in strategic arms.

They were Jeremy J. Stone, director of the Federation of American Scientists, and Richard J. Barnet of the Institute for Policy Studies.

Their proposal for an accompanying Senate resolution was much like that advanced this morning by Senator McGovern, who said in an interview that he was serious about his statement that he cannot support the treaty "as presently constituted" without some formula to prevent it from "escalating rather than reversing the arms race."

Since Mr. McGovern's resolution would at least temporarily halt development of the new MX intercontinental missile it is likely to be strongly opposed by Senators who favor the treaty only if measures are taken to modernize United States strategic forces.